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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of a telephone survey of New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) members. The purpose of this study is to identify problems affecting the education of children in New Jersey urban school districts and make recommendations for improvement. First, the design of the study is described, and then the report is organized around findings in these areas: demographic characteristics; adequacy of resources; work environment; employee/student recognition; the learning environment; school problems; the educational program; basic skills deficiencies; career choice; and job satisfaction. A list of demographic highlights of the participants in the study is included. Most of this report consists of statistical tables. The study identified these major problems: (1) large class size; (2) no reasonable limits on the number of students with special needs placed in regular classrooms; (3) inadequate number of guidance counselors, substitute teachers, and classrooms; (4) lack of support from parents for teachers' efforts; (5) large number of students from problem home environments and lacking basic skills; (6) high failure rate of students on standardized tests; and (7) frequency of student absenteeism. Appendices include the survey form, a table of approximate sampling tolerances to use in evaluating results, and a list of the 29 New Jersey school districts identified as urban. (KH)

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NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

This report summarizes the results of a telephone survey of NJEA members. The purpose of this study is to identify problems affecting the education of children in New Jersey urban school districts and recommendations for improvement.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The major portion of this study involves a random sample of NJEA members selected from 29 urban aid school districts identified by the State Department of Education and the Department of Community Affairs. These districts are also identified by the State Department of Education as having low socio-economic levels (a rating of A or B on the district factor group (DFG) rating scale). Attached to this report is a list of the 29 school districts from which the sample of respondents was selected (Appendix C).

In addition to the urban school employee sample, a random sample of NJEA members from nonurban school districts was selected to participate in the study. (Nonurban school districts are those not included in the list of 29 urban school districts.) The purpose of interviewing nonurban school employees was to provide a comparison of the opinions of urban and nonurban respondents.

Completed interviews were obtained from 412 randomly selected NJEA members (300 active professional and 112 active supportive) from urban school districts and 316 randomly selected NJEA members (250 active professional and 66 active supportive) from nonurban districts. Interviews were conducted during the period of December 10 through December 22, 1986, by Intersearch Corporation of Willow Grove, Pa.

The questionnaire developed for this interview (Appendix A) covered many aspects of the school environment including:

- Adequacy of Resources (Tables 2 - 5)
- Work Environment (Tables 6 and 7)
- Employee/Student Recognition (Table 8)
- The Learning Environment (Tables 9 and 10)
- School Problems (Tables 11 - 16)

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The Educational Program (Tables 17 - 19)

Basic Skills Deficiencies (Tables 20 and 21)

Career Choice (Table 22)

Job Satisfaction (Table 23)

The study was designed so that all respondents (professional and support staff) were asked to respond to the first part of the questionnaire dealing with the general school environment. The last part of the questionnaire dealt specifically with the educational program. Only teachers were asked to respond to these items.

The results of the first part of the survey are reported for the total group of urban respondents and, in some instances, for the subgroup of respondents identified as urban teachers. Comparable data for the nonurban sample are also included in the Summary Tables. The results of the second part of the survey are reported for urban and nonurban teacher respondents, since they are the only respondents who answered this part of the questionnaire.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any study based on a random selection process, there are statistical limitations associated with the interpretation of the percentages in this report. These limitations are referred to as sampling tolerances. For the current study, the sampling tolerance for percentages reported for the total group of urban respondents is approximately five (5%) percent, based on the ninety-five (95%) percent confidence level. In other words, chances are 95 out of 100 that a reported percentage does not vary more than five percentage points (plus or minus) from the actual percentage in the population. The sampling tolerance for percentages reported for the total group of nonurban respondents is approximately six (6%) percent. Approximate sampling tolerances for subgroups of respondents are as follows: Urban Teachers (6%), Nonurban Teachers (7%), Urban Junior/Middle and High School respondents (10%), Nonurban Junior/Middle and High School respondents (10%). (See Appendix B-1 for approximate sampling tolerances for various size groups at the ninety-five (95%) percent confidence level.)

When comparing subgroups, sampling tolerances must also be taken into consideration. Appendix B-2 shows the percentage difference that must be obtained between the responses of two subgroups before the results are considered to be statistically significant at the ninety-five (95%) percent confidence level. These differences are noted throughout this report.

DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

As a group, the participants in this study have a broad range of work experience and hold various positions. Noteworthy characteristics of the urban population are as follows: (See Table 1)

* More than one-fourth of the sample (27%) have more than 16 years of work experience in N.J. public schools. Four out of every five respondents (81%) has more than 3 years of work experience in a N.J. public school.

* Twenty-two (22%) percent have been working in their current school district for 16 or more years. Three out of every 4 respondents (75%) have been working in their current school district more than 3 years.

* More than one-half of the respondents (56%) are under the age of 40.

* The subgroup of teacher respondents represents all school levels. One-half of the respondents (50%) work on the elementary school level, twenty-one (21%) percent work on the junior/ middle school level, and twenty-five (25%) percent work on the high school level. An additional four (4%) percent have a multilevel school assignment.

* The majority of professional staff respondents are regular classroom teachers (63%). An additional thirteen (13%) percent are either basic skills instructors, reading specialists, supplemental teachers, or bilingual instructors.

An analysis of the data reported for the characteristics of the nonurban sample of respondents reveals there is no statistically significant difference between the characteristics of the urban and nonurban group of respondents.

TABLE 1

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLES

Question #	Urban (N = 412)	Nonurban (N = 316)
1. TOTAL YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE IN NJ SCHOOLS		
Less than 3 years	19.2%	11.1%
3 - 8 years	25.5	30.1
9 - 15 years	28.2	25.0
16 - 20 years	14.8	19.9
More than 20 years	12.4	13.9
2. YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE IN PRESENT DISTRICT		
Less than 3 years	25.5	20.9
3 - 8 years	26.7	29.1
9 - 15 years	26.0	21.5
16 - 20 years	12.4	17.7
More than 20 years	9.5	10.8
12. AGE		
Under 30 years	17.3	13.7
31 - 40 years	39.0	35.8
41 - 50 years	22.9	28.4
51 - 60 years	17.1	18.8
Above 60	3.7	3.2
	Professional Staff (N = 300)	
13. MAJOR WORK ASSIGNMENT (Professional Staff Only)		
Elementary Level	50.3%	43.8
Junior/Middle Level	20.8	21.7
High School Level	24.8	33.3
Multilevel Assignment	4.0	1.2
14. POSITION (Professional Staff Only)		
Classroom Teacher	62.8	70.8
BSI/Reading Specialist/Supplemental/ Bilingual	13.4	7.2
Guidance/LDTC/Speech/Social Worker	8.1	5.2
Special Ed./Resource Room	7.7	11.2
Nurse/Librarian/Multimedia Consultant	6.0	4.0
Administrator/Coordinator/Department Head	2.0	1.2
Other	----	.4

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

During this part of the interview, each respondent was read a list of items describing resources of school environments. For every item, the respondent was asked to assign a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE, or INADEQUATE to describe the school environment. Data are provided for the total group of urban and nonurban respondents and for the subgroups of urban and nonurban teachers (Tables 2 - 5).

The results of the survey indicate inadequacies in urban school environments. For example, almost 7 out of every 10 teachers (59% of all urban respondents) reported that the number of substitute teachers is inadequate. In addition, almost one-half of teachers indicated that the number of classrooms (47%), class size (47%), and the number of guidance counselors (49%) are inadequate.

Other areas of inadequacy reported by more than one-third of teacher respondents include heating and plumbing in buildings (37%), ventilation in buildings (36%), number of programs for gifted and talented students (39%), and numbers of computers for student instruction (39%).

The statistical differences between the urban and nonurban group of respondents (Tables 4 and 5) are of particular importance. Most notably, a significantly higher percentage of urban than nonurban teacher respondents reported that the environment is inadequate in 17 out of the 19 resource areas. When comparing the opinions of all urban and nonurban respondents, a statistically significant difference is noted in 14 out of the 19 resource areas.

Several of these differences are of major concern. For example, when rating the adequacy of class size, almost one-half of urban teachers (47%) reported an inadequacy in this area compared to only twenty (20%) percent of nonurban teachers. Generally speaking, the number of school personnel also appears to be a concern since a significantly higher percentage of urban teachers reported an inadequacy in the number of guidance counselors (urban 49%, nonurban 38%), special services personnel (urban 38%, nonurban 20%), special subject teachers (urban 33%, nonurban 18%), and support staff (urban 32%, nonurban 19%). In addition, more than one-third of urban teacher respondents (35%) reported that the number of programs for students with special needs is inadequate, compared to only eighteen (18%) percent of nonurban teachers.

TABLE 2

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

ALL URBAN RESPONDENTS (412)

5. I am going to read a list of items describing elements of school environments. Please indicate whether the schools in which you work have sufficient resources in each area by assigning a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE to each item.

	INADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	VERY GOOD	DON'T KNOW
Number of substitute teachers	58.9%	28.7%	4.9%	7.5%
Number of guidance counselors	42.8	36.0	10.0	11.2
Class size	41.0	42.2	12.9	3.9
Number of classrooms	40.8	40.0	16.3	2.9
Number of programs for gifted and talented students	35.8	38.9	15.3	10.0
Number of computers for student instruction	34.0	37.1	17.2	11.7
Heating and plumbing in buildings	33.7	43.9	19.9	2.4
Ventilation in buildings	33.0	48.1	16.7	2.2
Number of special services personnel	31.6	43.7	18.0	6.8
Amount of space within classrooms	30.9	52.3	13.4	3.4
Number of programs for students with special needs	30.9	41.8	20.7	6.6
Number of special subject teachers in Art, Music and Physical Education	28.6	46.1	18.9	6.3
Availability of materials, supplies and equipment	28.2	47.8	19.9	4.1
Physical condition of buildings	25.7	50.2	22.6	1.5
Number of support staff	25.1	50.1	18.0	6.8
Number of classroom teachers	22.8	53.2	18.7	5.3
Building security	22.6	52.2	20.9	4.4
Availability of administrators to resolve problems	21.4	48.5	26.7	3.4
Number of administrators	16.7	55.6	24.0	3.6

TABLE 3

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

URBAN TEACHERS (300)

5. I am going to read a list of items describing elements of school environments. Please indicate whether the schools in which you work have sufficient resources in each area by assigning a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE to each item.

	INADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	VERY GOOD	DON'T KNOW
Number of substitute teachers	68.6%	24.7%	4.7%	2.0%
Number of guidance counselors	48.8	36.8	9.7	4.7
Class size	47.0	41.7	11.3	----
Number of classrooms	46.7	37.7	15.3	.3
Number of computers for student instruction	39.3	36.7	17.7	6.3
Number of programs for gifted and talented students	38.8	39.5	17.1	4.7
Number of special services personnel	38.3	42.3	17.3	2.0
Heating and plumbing in buildings	37.0	43.3	18.7	1.0
Ventilation in buildings	35.7	48.7	15.0	.7
Number of programs for students with special needs	35.3	42.3	20.0	2.3
Number of special subject teachers in Art, Music and Physical Education	33.3	46.0	19.7	1.0
Amount of space within classrooms	33.0	55.0	11.3	.7
Availability of materials, supplies and equipment	32.3	47.7	19.0	1.0
Number of support staff	31.8	46.5	18.4	3.3
Physical condition of buildings	29.0	50.7	20.3	----
Number of classroom teachers	29.0	51.3	18.7	1.0
Building security	25.0	54.7	19.0	1.3
Availability of administrators to resolve problems	23.3	49.0	27.3	.3
Number of administrators	17.7	57.0	25.0	.3

TABLE 4

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

ALL URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

5. I am going to read a list of items describing elements of school environments. Please indicate whether the schools in which you work have sufficient resources in each area by assigning a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE to each item.

	Percent Reporting Resource is INADEQUATE	
	Urban (412)	Nonurban (316)
Number of substitute teachers	58.9%	51.9%
*Number of guidance counselors	42.8	33.2
*Class size	41.0	19.0
*Number of classrooms	40.8	30.7
*Number of programs for gifted and talented sutdents	35.8	21.5
*Number of computers for students instruction	34.0	23.1
Heating and plumbing in buildings	33.7	29.4
Ventilation in buildings	33.0	27.5
*Number of special services personnel	31.6	18.4
*Amount of space within classrooms	30.9	15.2
*Number of programs for students with special needs	30.9	15.2
*Number of special subject teachers in Art, Music and Physical Education	28.6	17.1
*Availability of materials, supplies and equipment	28.2	15.8
*Physical condition of buildings	25.7	11.1
Number of support staff	25.1	19.0
*Number of classroom teachers	22.8	12.3
*Building security	22.6	14.6
Availability of administrators to resolve problems	21.4	19.0
*Number of administrators	16.7	9.8

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 5

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

URBAN AND NONURBAN TEACHER RESPONDENTS

5. I am going to read a list of items describing elements of school environments. Please indicate whether the schools in which you work have sufficient resources in each area by assigning a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE to each item.

	Percent Reporting Resource is INADEQUATE	
	Urban (300)	Nonurban (250)
*Number of substitute teachers	68.6%	54.2%
*Number of guidance counselors	48.8	37.7
*Class size	47.0	20.4
*Number of classrooms	46.7	32.8
*Number of computers for students instruction	39.3	25.6
*Number of programs for gifted and talented sutdents	38.8	24.4
*Number of special services personnel	38.3	20.4
Heating and plumbing in buildings	37.0	29.2
*Ventilation in buildings	35.7	27.2
*Number of programs for students with special needs	35.3	17.6
*Number of special subject teachers in Art, Music and Physical Education	33.3	18.5
*Amount of space within classrooms	33.0	15.6
*Availability of materials, supplies and equipment	32.3	16.8
*Number of support staff	31.8	18.8
*Physical condition of buildings	29.0	12.0
*Number of classroom teachers	29.0	13.6
*Building security	25.0	12.5
Availability of administrators to resolve problems	23.3	20.8
*Number of administrators	17.7	10.0

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

WORK ENVIRONMENT

To analyze the work environment, the survey asked two open-ended questions dealing with the most serious problem school employees experience in their jobs and the characteristics that make their school districts good places to work.

In response to the first question, employees identified a variety of problems they must deal with on a daily basis (Table 6). Almost one-fourth of the total group of urban respondents (22%) indicated that the most serious problem they encounter is a student-related problem (discipline/drugs/student attitudes/absenteeism). An additional ten (10%) percent of this group indicated that their most serious problem is an overload or stress-related problem.

On the other hand, in response to the question dealing with the characteristics that make their school districts good places to work, a majority (61%) indicated, that "people" are the main positive element in school environments (Table 7). Forty-one (41%) percent of the urban respondents (44% of nonurban respondents) indicated that the relationship they have with their colleagues is the most important factor that makes their school district a good place to work. An additional eleven (11%) percent of the urban group (15% of nonurban respondents) indicated that the support they receive from their administrator is a desirable characteristic of their work environment. An additional nine (9%) percent (7% of nonurban) indicated that it is the students that make their school district a good place to work.

A statistical comparison of the results of urban and nonurban respondents reveals that their opinions are similar. In other words, school setting (urban vs. nonurban) has little impact on what school employees feel are the factors that contribute to or detract from a desirable work environment. It is important to note that these Tables do not necessarily reflect the severity or frequency of problem areas but serve only to identify the factors that contribute to a desirable work environment.

TABLE 6

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

WORK ENVIRONMENT

ALL RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

3. What is the most serious problem you experience in your job?

	Urban (N = 412)	Nonurban (N = 316)
*Discipline/Drugs/Student Attitudes/ Absenteeism	21.6%	14.6%
Overload/Excessive Paperwork/Time Constraints	10.4	10.4
Overcrowded Classes/Not Enough Staff	8.2	5.1
Inadequate Facilities	6.8	4.4
*Incompetent/Uncooperative/Unsupportive Administrator	6.1	12.3
Uncooperative Parents/Apathy	5.6	4.4
Low Salary	4.4	3.8
Shortage of Supplies/Equipment	3.9	4.4
Miscellaneous/Other	10.4	12.7
No Response	22.6	27.8

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 7

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

WORK ENVIRONMENT

ALL RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

4. What makes your school district a good place to work?

	URBAN (N = 412)	NONURBAN (N = 316)
STAFF - Cooperative Spirit/Care About Students	40.8%	44.3%
Good Administrator/Supports Employees	10.9	14.9
Students	9.2	7.3
*Convenience/Location	8.5	*2.8
Good School Program/Environment	7.3	10.1
Benefits/Salary	6.3	5.4
Nice Community	1.9	3.2
Miscellaneous/Other	6.1	6.0
Don't Know/Nothing/Refused	9.0	6.0

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

EMPLOYEE/STUDENT RECOGNITION

School effectiveness research identified recognition of achievement as an important contributory factor in good schools. Thus, one of the questions deals with the frequency with which students and employees are recognized for noteworthy achievements in their schools. An analysis of Table 8 reveals that although noteworthy student achievements are recognized on a regular basis, the level of recognition for employee achievements is low.

Forty-five (45%) percent of urban respondents indicated that students are VERY OFTEN recognized for noteworthy achievements, while forty (40%) percent reported that students are OCCASIONALLY recognized for noteworthy achievements. On the other hand, almost 4 out of every 10 urban respondents (38%) indicated that employees are RARELY recognized for noteworthy achievements. Only sixteen (16%) percent reported that employees VERY OFTEN receive such recognition.

When comparing urban and nonurban respondents, it is apparent that nonurban school children receive significantly more recognition for noteworthy achievements than urban children. Six out of every ten nonurban respondents (61%) reported that students are VERY OFTEN recognized for noteworthy achievements (compared to forty-five (45%) of urban respondents). A slightly higher percentage of nonurban respondents (22%) than urban respondents (16%) also reported that employees are recognized VERY OFTEN for achievements, although both groups reported that employees receive substantially less recognition than students.

TABLE 8

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

EMPLOYEE/STUDENT RECOGNITION

ALL URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

*6. How often are students recognized for noteworthy achievements in your school?

	Urban (N = 410)	Nonurban (N = 316)
VERY OFTEN	44.6%	61.3%
OCCASIONALLY	39.5	30.5
RARELY	10.0	7.0
DON'T KNOW	5.9	1.3

*7. How often are employees recognized for noteworthy achievements in your school?

	Urban (N = 409	Nonurban (N = 316)
VERY OFTEN	16.1%	22.2%
OCCASIONALLY	40.6	38.4
RARELY	37.9	37.8
DON'T KNOW	5.4	1.6

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions dealing with the characteristics that make their school district a good place for children to learn and those that prevent students from learning. The respondents were asked to give several suggestions in response to these questions so that many of the characteristics that contribute to or detract from the learning environment could be identified. The accompanying tables outline the major responses.

The survey results clearly indicate that the major element that makes a school district a good place to learn is the dedication and quality of the staff (Table 9). More than 6 out of every 10 urban respondents (62%) and 7 out of every 10 nonurban respondents (72%) indicated that it is the dedication and quality of the staff that makes their school district a good place to learn. Twenty-two (22%) percent of the urban group and thirty-three (33%) percent of the nonurban group indicated that the curriculum or programs of the district make their school district a good place for children to learn.

Sixteen (16%) percent of the urban group could not identify even one element which contributes to making their school district a good place for children to learn. During the interview, many of these respondents said they felt they could not respond to this question because they personally believed that their school district was not a good place for children to learn.

From the responses to the question dealing with the factors that prevent children from learning, it is clear there are two elements in school environments that employees believe inhibit the learning process. Almost one-half of urban respondents (48%) and forty-six (46%) percent of nonurban respondents indicated that student attitudes, drugs, peer pressure, or discipline are the main reasons students are prevented from learning. Forty-three (43%) of the urban respondents and forty-one (41%) percent of the nonurban respondents indicated that a poor home environment or parental apathy prevents students from learning.

There are only a few statistically significant differences between the opinions of urban and nonurban school employees on these questions. However, it is important to note that these questions do not necessarily address the extent to which each of the factors occurs in the learning environment. Rather, these questions are intended merely to identify the relevant factors. Other questions in this study dealing with the extent of problem areas more adequately identify the differences between the problems existing in urban and nonurban school environments.

TABLE 9

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ALL URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

8. What makes your school district a good place for children to learn? ^

	Urban (N = 412)	Nonurban (N = 316)
*Dedicated Quality Staff/Care About Students	62.1%	71.8%
*Good Programs/Broad Curriculum/Good Learning Environment	21.8	32.9
Supplies/Resources/Facilities are Good	9.4	13.3
Cooperation Among Staff	5.3	3.5
Good School Administration	4.6	5.1
Parents/Community Support School	3.4	5.1
Reasonable Class Size/Adequate Number of Staff	2.9	7.3
Diversified Extra-Curricular Activities	1.7	4.4
Miscellaneous/Other	7.5	7.3
*No Response	15.5	3.8

^Total percents exceed 100. Respondents were encouraged to give more than one response.

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 10

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ALL URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

9. What prevents students from learning? ^

	Urban (N = 412)	Nonurban (N = 316)
Student Attitudes/Drugs/Peer Pressure/ Discipline	47.6%	46.2%
Poor Home Environment/Parental Apathy	42.7	40.8
*Class Size/Overcrowded Classrooms	14.6	7.0
Weak Basic Skills/Language Barrier/Learning Deficiencies	8.5	7.0
Inadequate Supplies/Facilities Programs/Money	8.0	7.0
Attendance/Drop-Out Rate	5.8	1.9
Inadequate Number of Staff	2.7	2.2
Classroom Interruptions	1.2	5.4
Miscellaneous/Other	14.8	18.0
No Response/No Suggestion	9.2	10.4

^Total percents exceed 100. Respondents were encouraged to give more than one response.

***Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$**

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

The respondents were presented with a list of problems that could exist in school districts. They were asked to indicate whether each item was a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools where they work. An analysis of Tables 11 and 12 reveals that several major problems exist in urban school districts.

For example, sixty-three (63%) percent of urban teachers (56% of all urban respondents) indicated a major problem is the number of students with poor home environments. In addition, fifty-two (52%) percent of urban teachers (45% of all urban respondents) indicated a major problem in their school district is the number of students lacking basic skills.

Other major problems identified by urban teachers include a high failure rate of students on standardized tests (44%), student absenteeism (35%), and a high number of students who repeat more than one grade (33%).

In comparison to the nonurban teachers (Table 14), a significantly higher percentage of urban teachers report that 10 out of 13 items are MAJOR PROBLEM areas.

A subgroup of problems presented on the survey is analyzed for the combined group of junior/middle and high school respondents. These problems typically appear at the secondary school level. Table 15 reports the results of the survey for secondary school teachers along with a comparison to the responses of nonurban teachers.

This analysis reveals that substantially more urban than nonurban teachers report a major problem with student absenteeism (urban 47%, nonurban 12%). Other statistically significant differences exist for dropout rate, teenage pregnancy, student drug and alcohol abuse, number of students lacking basic skills, and student violence.

The one remaining open-ended question asked of all interviewees dealt with the actions that need to be taken to make their school district more successful in educating students. The respondents were encouraged to give several suggestions.

These suggestions were so diverse, it became difficult to categorize the responses into broad categories. Table 16 reports the major ideas suggested by the respondents. A list of additional suggestions (each reported by fewer than four respondents) is also included.

TABLE 11

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

ALL URBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

10. Now, I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

	MAJOR PROBLEM	SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM	DON'T KNOW
Number of students with poor home environments	55.5%	29.4%	7.8%	7.3%
Number of students lacking basic skills	45.1	32.0	12.9	10.0
High failure rate of students on standardized tests	35.9	29.6	22.6	11.9
Student absenteeism	31.8	39.6	24.8	3.9
Number of students who repeat more than one grade	27.5	39.4	22.6	10.5
Students lacking proper nutrition	24.4	42.4	24.6	8.5
Student mobility	22.8	30.1	37.6	9.5
Lack of a clearly defined discipline code	20.0	29.2	46.5	4.4
Inadequate opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making	17.6	35.1	41.5	5.9
Inadequate support for staff when enforcing discipline	14.6	23.5	57.0	4.9
Student violence	11.9	40.8	45.4	1.9
Inadequate opportunities for staff to work cooperatively together	7.3	26.5	62.3	3.9
Teacher turnover rate	6.8	23.8	63.1	6.3

TABLE 12

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

URBAN TEACHERS (300 Respondents)

10. Now, I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

	MAJOR PROBLEM	SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM	DON'T KNOW
Number of students with poor home environments	63.3%	28.7%	6.7%	1.3%
Number of students lacking basic skills	52.0	34.7	10.7	2.7
High failure rate of students on standardized tests	44.0	30.7	21.3	4.0
Student absenteeism	34.7	42.0	23.3	----
Number of students who repeat more than one grade	33.4	40.5	21.4	4.7
Student mobility	28.3	31.3	35.0	5.3
Students lacking proper nutrition	28.3	48.0	21.0	2.7
Inadequate opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making	21.4	38.1	38.5	2.0
Lack of a clearly defined discipline code	21.1	31.1	47.8	----
Inadequate support for staff when enforcing discipline	17.0	23.3	59.3	.3
Student violence	12.3	43.7	43.3	.7
Inadequate opportunities for staff to work cooperatively together	8.4	28.4	62.9	.3
Teacher turnover rate	8.3	28.0	62.0	1.7

TABLE 13

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

ALL URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

10. Now, I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

	Percent Reporting Item is a MAJOR PROBLEM	
	Urban (N = 412)	Nonurban (N = 316)
*Number of students with poor home environments	55.5%	23.4%
*Number of students lacking basic skills	45.1	11.7
*High failure rate of students on standardized tests	35.9	7.3
*Student absenteeism	31.8	8.2
*Number of students who repeat more than one grade	27.5	5.4
*Students lacking proper nutrition	24.4	6.0
*Student mobility	22.8	7.6
*Lack of a clearly defined discipline code	20.0	8.9
Inadequate opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making	17.6	13.6
*Inadequate support for staff when enforcing discipline	14.6	7.0
*Student violence	11.9	2.5
Inadequate opportunities for staff to work cooperatively together	7.3	5.1
Teacher turnover rate	6.8	3.5

TABLE 14

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

URBAN AND NONURBAN TEACHERS

10. Now, I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

	Percent Reporting Item is a MAJOR PROBLEM	
	Urban (N = 300)	Nonurban (N = 250)
*Number of students with poor home environments	63.3%	26.4%
*Number of students lacking basic skills	52.0	12.4
*High failure rate of students on standardized tests	44.0	8.0
*Student absenteeism	34.7	8.4
*Number of students who repeat more than one grade	33.4	6.0
*Student mobility	28.3	8.4
*Students lacking proper nutrition	28.3	6.0
Inadequate opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making	21.4	15.2
*Lack of a clearly defined discipline code	21.1	7.6
*Inadequate support for staff when enforcing discipline	17.0	8.0
*Student violence	12.3	3.2
Inadequate opportunities for staff to work cooperatively together	8.4	5.6
Teacher turnover rate	8.3	3.2

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 15

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SELECTED PROBLEM AREAS

Junior/Middle - High School Respondents

10. Now, I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

URBAN RESPONDENTS (136)

	MAJOR PROBLEM	SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM	DON'T KNOW
Student Dropout Rate	28.7%	45.6%	23.5%	2.2%
Teenage Pregnancy	30.1	45.6	22.8	1.5
Student Drug and Alcohol Abuse	22.1	54.4	23.5	----
Student Suicide	3.7	21.3	72.1	2.9
Student Absenteeism	47.1	37.5	15.4	----
Number of Students Lacking Basic Skills	55.9	36.8	5.1	2.2
Student Violence	15.4	50.0	34.6	----

URBAN AND NONURBAN RESPONDENTS

Percent reporting item is a MAJOR PROBLEM.

	Urban (N = 136)	Nonurban (N = 137)
*Student Dropout Rate	28.7%	5.8%
*Teenage Pregnancy	30.1	2.9
*Student Drug and Alcohol Abuse	22.1	11.0
Student Suicide	3.7	5.1
*Student Absenteeism	47.1	12.4
*Number of Students Lacking Basic Skills	55.9	16.8
*Student Violence	15.4	4.4

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 16A

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

ALL URBAN RESPONDENTS
(Professional and Support)

11. What should be done to make your school district more successful in educating students? *

Response	Urban (N = 412)
Increase parental cooperation with schools	20.9%
Reduce class size	13.6
Involve teachers in decision-making	8.2
Improve facilities	8.0
Hire more staff	7.5
Improve supplies/equipment	7.5
Improve discipline	6.1
Need better administrative practices	4.4
Improve cooperation (communication) between staff and administrators	3.9
Increase salary	2.9
Update (improve) curriculum	2.9
Improve attendance	2.7
Improve teachers' attitude (morale)	2.7
Improve basic skills	2.4
Provide more help in the classroom to individualize instruction	2.4
Remove politics from schools	2.2
Provide more special education services	1.9
Reduce paperwork	1.9
Provide more recognition, respect for teachers	1.7
Money	1.7
Improve quality of staff	1.7
Improve communication (cooperation) between teachers and students	1.2
Improve inservice	1.2
Eliminate HSPT	1.0
Miscellaneous/Other (see accompanying sheet)	18.9
No Response	14.8

*Total percent exceeds 100. Respondents were encouraged to give more than one response.

TABLE 16B

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

11. What should be done to make your school district more successful in educating students?

MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER (Each Idea was Suggested by Fewer Than 4 Respondents)

Implement new programs.
Provide pre-school programs.
Provide more recognition for student achievements.
Provide transitional 8th grade.
The administration must be more consistent.
Provide more self-contained areas for students with problems.
Revise basic skills program so students don't have to be removed from classes.
Provide a breakfast program.
The board of education and the administration must stress education not money.
Reduce the number of times parents pull kids out of school for appointments.
Increase school security.
Initiate summer programs.
Provide more extracurricular activities.
Improve placement of students with special needs.
Initiate study groups for students after the school day.
Decrease student mobility.
Fire the school board.
Initiate a year round school.
Eliminate open classrooms.
Adopt a budget that reflects future needs.
Work on pregnancy, drug abuse among students.
Reduce teacher sick days.
Make students aware that future is determined by the education they receive today.
Group students according to ability.
Provide more special programs.
Special classes (Gifted and Talented) should be offered after school.
State should take over school district.
We need better planning before initiating new programs.
Improve scheduling of classes.
Programs should be geared to the level of the student.
We need a stronger local association.
Provide more Art, Music, and Physical Education.
Improve the Gifted program.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The second part of the questionnaire was designed specifically for teacher respondents and dealt directly with the educational program. A major component of this part of the questionnaire involved a series of statements regarding positive elements of school programs. For each item, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they STRONGLY AGREE, TEND TO AGREE, TEND TO DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE that the item reflects what is occurring in the schools where they worked. Listed below are the four major areas identified as problems by more than one-half of urban teachers (Table 17).

> REQUIRED PAPERWORK RARELY INTERFERES WITH THE TIME I HAVE TO PLAN AND TO WORK WITH STUDENTS (27% DISAGREE, 40% STRONGLY DISAGREE)
>
> PARENTS REGULARLY ATTEND STUDENT CONFERENCES (32% DISAGREE, 28% STRONGLY DISAGREE)
>
> THERE ARE SUFFICIENT FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN YOUR DISTRICT TO PROPERLY FUND A VARIETY OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS (30% DISAGREE, 21% STRONGLY DISAGREE)
>
> PARENTS SUPPORT TEACHERS' EFFORTS TO ASSIGN HOMEWORK (33% DISAGREE, 18% STRONGLY DISAGREE)

Survey results for nonurban teachers are reported in Table 18. These responses are then compared with the responses of urban teachers in Table 19. An analysis of this Table reveals that significantly more urban teachers report problems with the school program than nonurban professionals.

For example, substantially more urban than nonurban teachers report a problem with the amount of support they receive from parents in discipline (urban 48%, nonurban 24%), homework (urban 51%, nonurban 26%), and conferences (urban 60%, nonurban 28%). Four out of 10 urban teachers (41%) compared to twenty-two (22%) percent of nonurban teachers report that there is no reasonable limit on the number of students with special needs placed in regular classes. One-half of urban respondents (compared to one-third of nonurban respondents) reported that the district does not fund a variety of program offerings.

On the other hand, 8 out of every 10 urban teachers indicated that teachers are encouraged to set high standards for student achievement, while eighty-seven (87%) percent indicated that there are sufficient opportunities provided for parent conferences. Almost three-fourths of urban teachers (74%) indicated that the curriculum is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

TABLE 17

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

URBAN TEACHERS (300)

16. Now, I'm going to read a list of statements regarding school programs. For each statement, please indicate whether you STRONGLY AGREE, TEND TO AGREE, TEND TO DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE that the item reflects what is occurring in the schools in which you work.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Required paperwork rarely interferes with the time I have to plan and to work with students	9.7%	23.0%	27.0%	40.3%
Parents regularly attend student conferences	7.7	32.0	32.0	28.3
There are sufficient financial resources in your district to properly fund a variety of program offerings	13.6	35.5	30.3	20.6
Parents support teachers' efforts to assign homework	9.4	39.7	33.0	17.8
Parents support teachers' efforts to enforce discipline	9.4	43.1	32.1	15.4
Inservice education meetings are related to my professional needs	15.4	37.5	25.8	21.4
There is a reasonable limit on the number of students with special needs, such as compensatory education, bilingual, gifted and talented or special education who are placed in regular classes	10.2	49.2	25.1	15.6
Nonteaching duties are kept to a minimum to maximize the effective use of class time	14.1	46.3	26.2	13.4
Teachers are provided sufficient educational materials for the number of students	16.3	46.0	24.7	13.0
Teachers have sufficient opportunities to assist each other on an informal basis for the purpose of improving classroom instruction	15.4	47.2	26.1	11.4
The curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of all students	17.8	46.3	27.2	8.7
Classroom interruptions are kept to a minimum in my school	22.0	44.7	18.0	15.3
Staff are made to feel that they are an important and integral part of the success of the educational system	20.0	48.0	22.0	10.0
Our school has adopted a workable homework policy	19.6	48.5	23.7	8.2
There are sufficient bilingual classes to meet the needs of students	24.2	44.6	20.4	10.7
Teachers are involved in the development and selection of curricular materials	19.3	50.3	20.0	10.3
Educational materials are up-to-date	20.7	53.2	18.1	8.0
The curriculum is reviewed and updated on a regular basis	20.4	53.7	18.4	7.5
Teachers are encouraged to set high standards for student achievement	32.7	48.0	14.7	4.7
Sufficient opportunities are provided for parent conferences	34.1	53.2	10.4	2.3

TABLE 18

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

NONURBAN TEACHERS (250)

16. Now, I'm going to read a list of statements regarding school programs. For each statement, please indicate whether you STRONGLY AGREE, TEND TO AGREE, TEND TO DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE that the item reflects what is occurring in the schools in which you work.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Required paperwork rarely interferes with the time I have to plan and to work with students	9.3%	28.5%	28.5%	33.7%
Parents regularly attend student conferences	21.2	51.0	18.8	9.0
There are sufficient financial resources in your district to properly fund a variety of program offerings	23.4	44.0	24.6	8.1
Parents support teachers' efforts to assign homework	15.9	58.2	19.7	6.3
Parents support teachers' efforts to enforce discipline	10.6	65.7	19.2	4.5
Inservice education meetings are related to my professional needs	10.5	43.5	26.2	19.8
There is a reasonable limit on the number of students with special needs, such as compensatory education, bilingual, gifted and talented or special education, who are placed in regular classes	18.7	59.8	13.3	8.3
Nonteaching duties are kept to a minimum to maximize the effective use of class time	14.2	47.6	23.6	14.6
Teachers are provided sufficient educational materials for the number of students	30.4	48.8	17.2	3.6
Teachers have sufficient opportunities to assist each other on an informal basis for the purpose of improving classroom instruction	19.5	44.7	24.8	11.0
The curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of all students	28.5	53.7	14.6	3.3
Classroom interruptions are kept to a minimum in my school	27.7	49.4	13.7	9.2
Staff are made to feel that they are an important and integral part of the success of the educational system	25.8	48.0	17.7	8.5
Our school has adopted a workable homework policy	23.5	52.9	17.6	5.9
There are sufficient bilingual classes to meet the needs of students	24.2	45.3	14.3	16.1
Teachers are involved in the development and selection of curricular materials	31.8	56.7	8.2	3.3
Educational materials are up-to-date	33.1	54.8	10.5	1.6
The curriculum is reviewed and updated on a regular basis	36.8	48.2	10.9	4.0
Teachers are encouraged to set high standards for student achievement	37.2	52.8	9.2	.8
Sufficient opportunities are provided for parent conferences	35.3	53.4	8.8	2.4

TABLE 19

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

URBAN AND NONURBAN TEACHERS

16. Now, I'm going to read a list of statements regarding school programs. For each statement, please indicate whether you STRONGLY AGREE, TEND TO AGREE, TEND TO DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE that the item reflects what is occurring in the schools in which you work.

	PERCENT STRONGLY DISAGREE OR TEND TO DISAGREE	
	Urban (N = 300)	Nonurban (N = 250)
Required paperwork rarely interferes with the time I have to plan and to work with students	67.3%	62.2%
*Parents regularly attend student conferences	60.3	27.8
*There are sufficient financial resources in your district to properly fund a variety of program offerings	50.9	32.7
*Parents support teachers' efforts to assign homework	50.8	26.0
*Parents support teachers' efforts to enforce discipline	47.5	23.7
Inservice education meetings are related to my professional needs	47.2	46.0
*There is a reasonable limit on the number of students with special needs, such as compensatory education, bilingual, gifted and talented or special education who are placed in regular classes	40.7	21.6
Nonteaching duties are kept to a minimum to maximize the effective use of class time	39.6	38.2
*Teachers are provided sufficient educational materials for the number of students	37.7	20.8
Teachers have sufficient opportunities to assist each other on an informal basis for the purpose of improving classroom instruction	37.5	35.8
*The curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of all students	35.9	17.9
*Classroom interruptions are kept to a minimum in my school	33.3	22.9
Staff are made to feel that they are an important and integral part of the success of the educational system	32.0	26.2
*Our school has adopted a workable homework policy	31.9	23.5
There are sufficient bilingual classes to meet the needs of students	31.1	30.4
*Teachers are involved in the development and selection of curricular materials	30.3	11.5
*Educational materials are up-to-date	26.1	12.1
*The curriculum is reviewed and updated on a regular basis	25.9	14.9
*Teachers are encouraged to set high standards for student achievement	19.4	10.0
Sufficient opportunities are provided for parent conferences	12.7	11.2

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENCIES

Teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of their students who are deficient in basic skills. Four out of every 10 urban professional staff respondents indicated that more than sixty (60%) percent of their students are deficient in basic skills.

Table 21 reports the results for the subgroup of respondents who indicated that their major work assignment is as a regular classroom teacher. As with the total group, a statistically significant difference exists between the responses of urban and nonurban regular classroom teachers. Twenty-seven (27%) percent of urban classroom teachers, compared to only five (5%) percent of nonurban classroom teachers reported that sixty (60%) percent or more of their students are deficient in basic skills.

TABLE 20

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENCIES

URBAN AND NONURBAN PROFESSIONAL STAFF

*15. Approximately, what percent of students with whom you work are deficient in basic skills?

	Urban (N = 300)	Nonurban (N = 250)
5% or less	7.4%	31.0%
6 - 15%	9.5	18.5
16 - 30%	15.1	15.7
31 - 45%	9.2	6.0
46 - 60%	18.7	8.3
61 - 74%	4.2	1.9
75 - 89%	11.6	2.8
90 - 99%	7.0	3.2
100%	17.3	12.5
15% or less	16.9%	49.5%
16 - 60%	43.0	30.0
60% or more	40.1	20.4

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

TABLE 21

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENCIES

URBAN AND NONURBAN REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

*15. Approximately, what percent of students with whom you work are deficient in basic skills?

	Urban (N = 183)	Nonurban (N = 156)
5% or less	9.3%	37.8%
6 - 15%	13.7	23.7
16 - 30%	17.0	19.2
31 - 45%	10.4	6.4
46 - 60%	22.5	8.3
61 - 74%	5.5	.6
75 - 89%	11.0	1.3
90 - 99%	3.3	1.3
100%	7.1	1.3
15% or less	23.0%	61.5%
16 - 60%	49.9	33.9
60% or more	26.9	4.5

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

CAREER CHOICE

Teachers were asked, in an open-ended question, why they chose to work in the school district where they are now working (Table 22).

For the most part, teachers indicated that the major reason they chose to work in their current school district was that they were either offered a job in the district (31%) or the district was located near their home (24%).

A higher percentage of respondents (21% nonurban, 9% urban) reported that they chose to work in their current school district because of its good reputation. For the most part, however, the responses of urban and nonurban teachers are similar.

TABLE 22

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

CAREER CHOICE

URBAN AND NONURBAN TEACHERS

20. Why did you choose to work in this school district?

	Urban (N = 300)	Nonurban (N = 250)
Offered a Job Here	31.4%	31.5%
Convenience/Location	24.4	26.6
Neighborhood Where I Grew Up	11.4	6.5
*Good Program/Environment/System	9.4	21.0
Wanted to Help Disadvantaged	7.0	.4
Already Worked Here (Sub, Aide, etc.)	3.3	4.8
Pay Increase/Good Salary	2.7	6.0
*Miscellaneous/Other	10.4	3.2

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

JOB SATISFACTION

The survey asked three distinct questions regarding level of job satisfaction (Table 23).

The first question asked the respondents to indicate whether or not they were satisfied with their current job. Eight out of 10 urban teachers (82%) stated that they are satisfied with their current job.

Teachers were also asked if they are actively seeking employment in another school district. Only six (6%) percent responded positively to this question.

Finally, the respondents were asked if they were actively seeking employment in another occupation. Only eight (8%) percent of urban respondents said that they are currently seeking employment outside of the field of education.

Nonurban teachers (89%) also reported a high level of job satisfaction. In addition, only four (4%) percent are seeking jobs in another school district, while eight (8%) percent are seeking employment in another occupation.

TABLE 23

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

JOB SATISFACTION

URBAN AND NONURBAN TEACHERS

	Urban (N = 300)	Nonurban (N = 250)
*17. Are you satisfied with your current job?		
YES	81.9%	89.2%
NO	18.1	10.8
18. Are you actively seeking employment in another school district?		
YES	6.0%	4.4%
NO	94.0	95.6
19. Are you actively seeking employment in another occupation?		
YES	8.3%	7.6%
NO	91.7	92.4

*Statistically significant difference between Urban and Nonurban response - $p < .05$

SUMMARY

The results of this survey identify a number of areas that need to be addressed if the education of children in urban areas is to improve. Two concerns identified by urban respondents, paperwork and discipline, were universal -- that is, cited just as often by school employees in both urban and nonurban districts.

Ten concerns, all identified as major problems by more than forty (40%) percent of urban school employees were identified as severe problems by significantly more urban than nonurban school employees.

These concerns are as follows:

* Large class size
* No reasonable limits on the number of students with special needs placed in regular classrooms
* Inadequate number of guidance counselors
* Inadequate number of substitute teachers
* Inadequate number of classrooms
* Lack of support from parents for teachers' efforts
* Number of students from problem home environments
* Number of students lacking basic skills
* High failure rate of students on standardized tests
* Frequency of student absenteeism

Efforts to improve education in urban environments must focus on finding solutions to the problems identified in this study.

Suggestions offered by urban respondents in the telephone survey indicate that school employees have many ideas about how to approach these issues. Their ideas reflect the creativity and imagination necessary to meet the URBAN CHALLENGE.

RMK/sy
1/87
NJEA Research

NJEA TELEPHONE SURVEY OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

DECEMBER 1986

RESPONDENT:

RESULT OF CALL

( ) Complete
( ) No Answer
( ) Call back at _____
( ) Refused, select an alternate
( ) Other_____
(Specify)

==========

Hello, this is _____ from _____ calling for the NJEA.
May I speak to _____
(Name of Respondent)

Hello, this is _____ from _____
calling for the NJEA. We're conducting an opinion survey of NJEA members to collect some information about school environments. We won't take much of your time and your name will not be used in any way.

1. How long have you worked in a NJ school district?

Less than 3 years.....1
3-8 years.....2
9-15 years.....3
16-20 years.....4
More than 20 years.....5

2. How long have you worked in the school district where you are now working?

Less than 3 years.....1
3-8 years.....2
9-15 years.....3
16-20 years.....4
More than 20 years.....5

3. What is the most serious problem you experience in your job?

_____

_____

_____ /_____/ (CODE)

4. What makes your school district a good place to work?

_____

_____

_____ /_____/ (CODE)

5. I am going to read a list of items describing elements of school environments. Please indicate whether the schools in which you work have sufficient resources in each area by assigning a rating of VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE to each item. Would you say the number of classrooms is VERY GOOD, ADEQUATE or INADEQUATE? (Continue through list)

	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	INADEQUATE	DON'T KNOW
a. Number of classrooms	1	2	3	4
b. Amount of space within classrooms	1	2	3	4
c. Class size	1	2	3	4
d. Heating and plumbing in buildings	1	2	3	4
e. Ventilation in buildings	1	2	3	4
f. Physical condition of buildings	1	2	3	4
g. Building security	1	2	3	4
h. Number of classroom teachers	1	2	3	4
i. Number of guidance counselors	1	2	3	4
j. Number of special services personnel	1	2	3	4
k. Number of support staff	1	2	3	4
l. Number of programs for students with special needs	1	2	3	4
m. Number of programs for gifted and talented students	1	2	3	4
n. Number of special subject teachers in Art, Music and Physical Education	1	2	3	4
o. Number of computers for student instruction	1	2	3	4
p. Availability of administrators to resolve problems	1	2	3	4
q. Number of administrators	1	2	3	4
r. Number of substitute teachers	1	2	3	4
s. Availability of materials, supplies and equipment	1	2	3	4

	VERY OFTEN	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	
6. How often are students recognized for noteworthy achievements in your school? Would you say VERY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY or RARELY?	1	2	3	
7. How often are employees recognized for noteworthy achievements in your school? Would you say VERY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY, or RARELY?	1	2	3	

8. What makes your school district a good place for children to learn? (Probe..."Anything else?")

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____ /____/ (CODE)

9. What prevents students from learning? (Probe..."Anything else?")

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____ /____/ (CODE)

10. Now I'm going to read a list of potential problems in school districts. For each item, please indicate whether it is a MAJOR PROBLEM, SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM, or NOT A PROBLEM in the schools in which you work.

	MAJOR PROBLEM	SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM	DON'T KNOW
a. Student drug and alcohol abuse	1	2	3	4
b. Student violence	1	2	3	4
c. Student absenteeism	1	2	3	4
d. Teenage pregnancy	1	2	3	4
e. Student dropout rate	1	2	3	4
f. Teacher turnover rate	1	2	3	4
g. Student mobility	1	2	3	4
h. Student suicide	1	2	3	4
i. Number of students who repeat more than one grade	1	2	3	4
j. High failure rate of students on standardized tests	1	2	3	4
k. Number of students lacking basic skills	1	2	3	4
l. Number of students with poor home environments	1	2	3	4
m. Students lacking proper nutrition	1	2	3	4
n. Lack of a clearly defined discipline code	1	2	3	4
o. Inadequate support for staff when enforcing discipline	1	2	3	4
p. Inadequate opportunities for staff to work cooperatively together	1	2	3	4
q. Inadequate opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making	1	2	3	4

11. What should be done to make your school district more successful in educating students? (Probe...."Anything else?")

_____

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____ /____/ (CODE)

_____

/____/ (CODE)

12. Into which age category do you fall - Under 30, 31-40, 41-50 51-60, above 60?

Under 30.....1
31-40.....2
41-50.....3
51-60.....4
Above 60.....5

CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW FOR ACTIVE SUPPORTIVE MEMBERS

ACTIVE PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS ONLY

13. Would you say you primarily work on the elementary, junior/middle or high school level?

Elementary Level.....1
Junior/Middle Level.....2
High School Level.....3
Multilevel Assignment...4

14. What is your position?_____

/_____/
(CODE)

15. Approximately, what percent of students with whom you work are deficient in basic skills?_____ /_____/
(CODE)

16. Now I'm going to read a list of statements regarding school programs. For each statement, please indicate whether you STRONGLY AGREE, TEND TO AGREE, TEND TO DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE that the item reflects what is occurring in the schools in which you work.

	SA	A	D	SD
a. Classroom interruptions are kept to a minimum in my school.	1	2	3	4
b. Inservice education meetings are related to my orofessional needs.	1	2	3	4
c. Teachers are provided sufficient educational materials for the number of students.	1	2	3	4
d. Educational materials are up-to-date.	1	2	3	4
e. There are sufficient financial resources in your district to properly fund a variety of program offerings.	1	2	3	4
f. Teachers are encouraged to set high standards for student achievement.	1	2	3	4
g. Required paperwork rarely interferes with the time I have to plan and to work with students.	1	2	3	4
h. Our school has adopted a workable homework policy.	1	2	3	4
i. Parents support teachers' efforts to assign homework.	1	2	3	4

		SA	A	D	SD
j.	Parents support teachers' efforts to enforce discipline.	1	2	3	4
k.	Parents regularly attend student conferences.	1	2	3	4
l.	Staff are made to feel that they are an important and integral part of the success of the educational system.	1	2	3	4
m.	Sufficient opportunities are provided for parent conferences.	1	2	3	4
n.	There are sufficient bilingual classes to meet the needs of students.	1	2	3	4
o.	Nonteaching duties are kept to a minimum to maximize the effective use of class time.	1	2	3	4
p.	Teachers have sufficient opportunities to assist each other on an informal basis for the purpose of improving classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4
q.	The curriculum is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4
r.	Teachers are involved in the development and selection of curricular materials.	1	2	3	4
s.	The curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of all students.	1	2	3	4
t.	There is a reasonable limit on the number of students with special needs, such as compensatory education, bilingual, gifted and talented or special education, who are placed in regular classes.	1	2	3	4

17. Are you satisfied with your current job? Yes.....1 No.....2

18. Are you actively seeking employment in another school district? Yes.....1 No.....2

19. Are you actively seeking employment in another occupation? Yes.....1 No.....2

20. Why did you choose to work in this school district?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(CODE)

THANK THE RESPONDENT FOR THEIR TIME AND CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW.

Approximate Sampling Tolerances (at 95% confidence) To Use In Evaluating Percentage Results Appearing In This Report

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ASKED QUESTIONS ON WHICH SURVEY RESULT IS BASED	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 10% or 90%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 20% or 80%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 30% or 70%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 40% or 60%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 50%
2,000	1	2	2	2	2
1,500	2	2	2	3	3
1,000	2	2	3	3	3
900	2	3	3	3	3
800	2	3	3	3	3
700	2	3	3	4	4
600	2	3	4	4	4
500	3	4	4	4	4
400	3	4	4	5	5
300	3	5	5	6	6
200	4	6	6	7	7
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	8	11	13	14	14

Source: The Metropolitan Life Survey Of The American Teacher 1985, p. 63.

Approximate Sampling Tolerances (at 95% confidence) To Use In Evaluating Differences Between Two Percentage Results Appearing In This Report

APPROXIMATE SAMPLE SIZE OF TWO GROUPS ASKED QUESTIONS ON WHICH SURVEY RESULT IS BASED	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 10% or 90%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 20% or 80%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 30% or 70%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 40% or 60%	PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 50%
2,000 vs. 2,000	2	2	3	3	3
1,000	2	3	4	4	4
800	3	3	4	4	4
500	3	4	4	5	5
300	4	5	6	6	6
200	4	6	7	7	7
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
1,000 vs. 1,000	3	4	4	4	4
800	3	4	4	5	5
500	3	4	5	5	5
300	4	5	6	6	6
200	5	6	7	7	8
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
800 vs. 800	3	4	4	5	5
500	3	4	5	5	6
300	4	5	6	7	7
200	5	6	7	8	8
100	6	8	10	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
500 vs. 500	4	4	6	6	6
300	4	6	7	7	7
200	6	7	8	8	8
100	7	9	10	11	11
50	9	12	13	14	15
300 vs. 300	5	6	7	8	8
200	5	7	8	9	9
100	7	9	10	11	11
50	9	12	14	15	15
200 vs. 200	6	8	9	10	10
100	7	10	11	12	12
50	9	12	14	15	15
100 vs. 100	8	11	13	14	14
50	10	14	16	17	17
50 vs. 50	12	16	18	19	20

Source: The Metropolitan Life Survey Of The American Teacher 1985, p. 64.

APPENDIX C

NJEA STUDY OF URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

29 School Districts Identified as Urban

Asbury Park City
Atlantic City
Bridgeton
Burlington
Camden
East Orange
Elizabeth
Garfield
Gloucester City
Harrison Town
Hoboken
Irvington
Jersey City
Keansburg
Long Branch
Millville
New Brunswick
Newark
Orange
Passaic City
Paterson
Pemberton Township
Perth Amboy City
Phillipsburg
Pleasantville
Trenton
Union City
Vineland
West New York